

Story 2035 (1997 Tape 2)

Narrator: Olkan Çuvalcı, Associate Professor, 37

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A Laz¹ and His Place on a Plane

When Dursun² was ready to return from Ankara to his home in Trabzon, he decided to travel there by air. After buying a ticket for that flight, he boarded the correct airplane and took a seat in the First Class section. Shortly after the plane had left the ground, a stewardess began checking the tickets of all passengers. As soon as she saw Dursun's ticket, she said to him, "Sir, this is not your seat. Your seat is in the Second Class section of this plane. Please move to that section."

¹The word Laz referred originally to an ethnic minority living primarily in Trabzon and Rize provinces, along the extreme eastern part of the Turkish Black Sea coast. More recently the word has come to be applied to any resident of the entire Turkish Black Sea coast. In the Turkish oral tradition, Laz people are stereotyped as being stupid or inept. This stereotype (like most others) is unjustifiable, for Lazes are, of course, much like other people.

²In Turkish folktales Laz males often have one or another of four very popular first names. Temel is by far the most popular name; in fact, Laz tales are often called Temel Tales. Dursun is probably the second most popular male name, followed by İdris and Hızır. When a folktale character is named Temel or Dursun, a Turkish audience knows at once it is about to hear a Laz anecdote.

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"No, I shall not move from where I am sitting. I like it here," answered Dursun.

The stewardess then repeated what she had said: "Sir, you have a Second Class ticket, which is much cheaper than a ticket for the First Class section, where you are sitting now. Please move to a seat in the Second Class section."

Then Dursun also repeated what he had said before: "I like this seat, and I am going to remain right here. No one can make me move anywhere else under any circumstances."

The stewardess was unable to handle this situation. But a passenger sitting in the nearest seat of the Second Class section had overheard some of the conversation between the stewardess and Dursun. That passenger signalled to the stewardess to come to him. He then said, "Excuse me, but will you please tell me what your problem is?"

The stewardess answered, "Dursun has a Second Class ticket, but he is sitting in the First Class section, and he refuses to move back here to the Second Class section where he belongs."

"Don't worry about that," said the second passenger. "Leave it to me, and I shall have him move back here, where he belongs." That helpful passenger went to Dursun

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and whispered something in his ear--f1s1l, f1s1l, f1s1l.³
Immediately after that, Dursun took his bags and went back to the last seat in the Second Class section.

Pleased but surprised to see Dursun move, the stewardess went to the helpful passenger and asked, "How did you persuade him to move? I spent several minutes trying to explain to him that he was sitting in the wrong place, but he did not want to understand that and he refused to move."

The helpful passenger said, "It was really quite easy. I simply told him that only the Second Class part of the plane was going to Trabzon and that if he wanted to reach Trabzon, he should be sitting in the Trabzon section back here."

³Onomatopoeia for the sound of whispering.